

Coming to America

When Nadia stepped from the carriage in Cleveland, Ohio, she found herself lost in a swirl of activity. Horses and carriages raced by; the clippidy clop of hooves mixed with the cries of the street vendors and the honks of car horns. The sights and sounds of America startled Nadia. The country seemed to be in a constant state of change. Houses were being built; electric streetlights were replacing gas lamps; more and more cars appeared on the streets. It was very different from Nadia's hometown in Poland, where things had barely changed for hundreds of years.

A car horn barked angrily at Nadia, and someone shouted something at her in English. Nadia did not know enough of the language to understand what the man was saying, but she knew from his facial expression that he wanted her out of his way. She scampered across the street and began to sob quietly.

Someone bumped her shoulder, and Nadia lowered her eyes, staring at her feet like a scolded child. Expecting to hear another angry voice yelling at her, Nadia timidly looked up to see a boy with a paper in his hand.

"You wanna buy a paper?" The boy uttered in English as he pushed a bundled-up newspaper toward her. Startled, Nadia jumped back.

Wiping her tears away with the back of her sleeve, Nadia imagined how unattractive she looked and felt ashamed. "I'm sorry," she muttered in Polish.

The boy tilted his head, examining her closely. Amused, he shoved the paper back in the sack slung over his shoulder. The boy seemed friendly, but Nadia had learned from her experiences in America that people smiled because they wanted your money. They stopped smiling when they found you had none.

"You speak the mother tongue, don't you?" he asked in Polish.

"Yes," Nadia replied. She smiled slowly at hearing her native language.

"My name's Alexander—or Alex" he announced proudly. "What part of Poland are you from?"

Sadly, she remembered the last time she had seen her home. She thought of the trip to Bremen, Germany, and the long, cold journey on the steam vessel across the Atlantic. She felt like crying again. "Krakow. I come from Krakow," she said. Alex nodded.

"My aunt's from Warsaw," he replied. "I bet that's close to Krakow."



Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5
LA.E.1.2.2 Plot/Conflict Form C

Krakow was not near Warsaw, but Nadia nodded anyway, relieved to have someone to talk to.

"Are you here with someone?" Alex asked. "Are you searching for a family member?"

"No," Nadia shyly responded. "I am here because America is the place of dreams. I was told I could get a job here."

"What luck!" Alex cried. "My aunt is looking for a maid, and she told me she wanted someone who could speak Polish. She'll pay you well."

Alex led Nadia by the arm down the maze of streets. They paused in front of a candy store window. Alex pressed his face against the glass. "Oh look. They're making taffy," he said, "and, red vines are on sale!" Nadia's mouth watered as Alex slipped into the store, emerging with two ropes of licorice. He handed one to Nadia. "This is serendipity," Alex said in English.

Nadia stared at the licorice and didn't understand. "Sahr...en...dip" she slowly repeated.

Alex shook his head. "Not the candy!" he explained, again speaking Polish. "Serendipity means finding something you are happy about by accident. You were looking for a job, and you found me; I was looking for someone to help my Aunt Hilga, and I found you."



"Yes," she answered without thinking. She put one end of the red vine in her mouth and chewed it slowly. She had never tasted anything quite so delicious before.

Finishing the candy as they walked, Alex led Nadia along the busy street where his aunt lived. Alex had been right about Aunt Hilga. When Alex explained how he had met Nadia, Aunt Hilga immediately hugged the young girl and began speaking to her in Polish. With two small boys to care for, Aunt Hilga seemed grateful to have the help, and Nadia was eager to prove she was a hard worker in the kitchen. Space was cramped in the modest home, so a pile of blankets was placed in an area behind the stairs to serve as Nadia's bed. At last, she was beginning to feel comfortable; perhaps she had found a home.

Everyday, Aunt Hilga's two sons received English lessons from a private tutor. Aunt Hilga felt it was important for her sons to learn the language of their new country, to become part of American society. While Nadia was cleaning dishes, she listened intently to the English lessons. Standing with her ear to the door, she quietly repeated what she heard as the teacher spoke a phrase in Polish and then translated it to English. Together, the boys' voices parroted back her words.

One day, Aunt Hilga walked into the kitchen while Nadia was listening at the door. Nadia blushed and nearly dropped the dish she was drying. Aunt Hilga understood. "Leave your dishes; I'll finish them," she said. "You go join the boys." Nadia smiled broadly and swung her arms around Aunt Hilga's waist. She knew a world of opportunity was about to open for her.

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5
LA.E.1.2.2 Plot/Conflict Form C

Name _____ **Date** _____

Directions: Read the story “Coming to America”, then circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What is Nadia’s BIGGEST problem in the story?
 - A. She has no family in America.
 - B. She cannot communicate in English.
 - C. She sleeps in a cramped place behind the stairs.
 - D. She has had unpleasant experiences with Americans.

2. What is the FIRST event in the story that tells the reader that Alex understands Polish?
 - A. He acts friendly toward Nadia.
 - B. He asks Nadia if she wants to buy a paper.
 - C. He speaks to Nadia in her native language.
 - D. He tells Nadia his aunt needs a maid who speaks Polish.

3. What does Aunt Hilga do to help solve Nadia’s problem?
 - A. She speaks Polish to Nadia.
 - B. She translates phrases into English.
 - C. She allows Nadia to work with the tutor.
 - D. She lets Nadia listen at the kitchen door.

4. Nadia listens quietly at the door during the boys’ lessons because she is
 - A. hiding from Aunt Hilda.
 - B. avoiding doing the dishes.
 - C. going to surprise the boys.
 - D. trying to hear the tutoring lessons.

5. Nadia wants to learn English so she can
 - A. find a nicer place to live.
 - B. ask Aunt Hilga for a raise.
 - C. show the boys how smart she is.
 - D. become part of American society.

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Answer Key – Coming to America

LA.E.1.2.2: The student identifies plot development or conflict resolution in a story and/or identifies how story events contribute to the plot development or conflict resolution. The student also makes simple inferences or draws conclusions regarding story elements.

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